

It Is No Secret....

By Bob Young

June 1, 2010

One of my mother's favorite songs was "It is No Secret What God Can Do". It is also true that "it is no secret what God will do." Why do so few understand what God will do? Why do many hold out false hope with some kind of "mumbly-jumbly" about a "loving God who could never punish anyone"? Why do some have an unbalanced view of God? Perhaps it is because we have not sought to know God. God will act according to and consistent with his nature.

A good beginning point for understanding what God will do is to read the Bible, the revelation of God. The Bible reveals God to us. The Bible tells about God's interactions and interventions with people—both his people and those who are not his people. Each year I try to read the entire Bible. Yesterday I finished reading my Old Testament reading project for 2010, completing the reading in five months. Let me share three "non-secrets" I noticed in this year's reading.

First, God is a holy God who desires that his people be holy. The Old Testament declares that God will make his people holy. This principle is unchanged in the New Testament where the redeeming, saving blood of Jesus had to be shed in order for human beings to be declared holy and justified with regard to ungodly sin. Even though God's ultimate purpose was to make his people holy so he could have full, unhindered fellowship with them, the Old Testament is often a story of a God who did not hesitate to discipline and reject his people when they failed to do his will. God disciplined them so they might know that he is God, in order that they might recognize him and respect him. In the Old Testament, one cannot help but be impressed with how often God's people walk away from him, with the result that God acts to get their attention and bring them back. Unfortunately, some of the unrepentant and rejected of Old Testament Israel never returned to God. God's salvation has never been universal, even for those identified as his people.

Second, God's holiness is balanced by his justice or righteousness. God, by his nature, is committed to fairness and justice. God will do what is right. Holiness and justice combined demand punishment for sin. In today's world, many think that God would never consider austere or severe measures. The Old Testament prophets do not see it that way nor does biblical history support the view. Not only will God reject the unrighteous, his own purity and righteousness demand that he do so. His purpose is that human beings may know his will and way and respond to him.

Third, God's holiness and justice are balanced by his loving kindness and mercy. Can God accomplish his will with discipline, rejection, and negative instruction? Will it work? Some would say "No" because only a remnant was delivered safely while a majority continued to walk away from God. The Old (and New) Testament writers say "Yes". God's love, justice, and holiness are satisfied in the lives of those who recognize him, respect and worship him, and respond to and imitate him in loving relationships, reflecting his glory.

Here is the biblical truth many miss: God doesn't want just any people—God wants people who will become like him. He will work in their lives to make that a reality, but human beings who were created with freedom of choice must choose to walk in the ways of God—holy, just, and loving.

Unfortunately, many people are not willing to make the choice and pay the price. The words of Jesus near the conclusion of the Sermon on the Mount summarize the truth that is unavoidable in reading the Old Testament: “the way is narrow and few find it....not everyone that cries ‘Lord, Lord’ enters the kingdom....one must hear and put into practice the words of Jesus.”